

French Police and Intriguing Group

Abduction of Ben Barka in Paris Follows the Fine Old Tradition Of Dreyfus, Other Scandals

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CPYRGHT

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PARIS—"Scandals," an anonymous philosopher wrote in the weekly Express last week, "are to politics what diseases are to the human organism: inevitable. At least once a generation a scandal becomes an 'affair'—the Dreyfus Affair, the Stavisky Affair, the Ben Barka Affair."

The nature of the scandal, the editorial continued, reveals the particular disease from which the affected regime suffers—in other terms, what occult influences are running the government.

The Dreyfus Affair exploded under the government because the army was calling the tune. The Stavisky Affair almost ended the Third Republic because money dominated that bourgeois regime. In the Ben Barka Affair, this country discovered with horror that two of its own police officers had kidnaped Mehdi Ben Barka, Morocco's leftist opposition leader, and delivered him to gangsters allegedly hired by Moroccan Interior Minister Gen. Mohammed Oufkir and apparently to his death. This demonstrated that the poison in the veins of the Fifth Republic is the power of the police.

Land of Intrigue

NOT THAT THE Fifth Republic is unique in this respect. "France is the favorite stamping ground for mysterious organizations which, in partnership with the power or behind its back, exercise a decisive influence on events," wrote leftist Gaullist Charles D'Aragon, a former Deputy, in an article which appeared in Le Monde by remarkable coincidence on the same day that policeman Louis Souchon broke down and confessed that he had kidnaped Ben Barka.

"Napoleon had his *Barbouzes* ('special' police). The Restoration also. They worked for the Tuileries (the Royal Palace). They worked for the Pavillon de Marsan (Interior Ministry). Divergent causes were defended with the same arms. Nothing is more typical than the manner in which the men of the Congregation (church information agents) acted alternately for and against the royal authority. Under the Fourth Re-

public, Ben Barka's airplane exercised a decisive influence on the future of the regime and of Algeria. Few statesmen have marked a page of history with the seal of their will to a comparable extent."

In Napoleon's day, agents kidnaped the Duke of Enghien on German territory and took him back to France for execution.

But if the Gaullists are not the first



THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON

From the Em

to suffer from abuses of police power, it is true that the turbulent history of the epoch of Gen. Charles de Gaulle has been marked more strongly than most by the imprint of police, particularly of secret police—sometimes legal, sometimes extralegal.

Before 1940, secret forces were mostly military. But when de Gaulle set up his exile headquarters in London, the need for eyes and ears in occupied France and the problems of directing

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ance movements required a secret police. Under Capt. Andre Dewavrin, whose alias was Passy, it became involved in some exceedingly scabrous episodes which were never revealed because it was wartime.

The same thing was happening on the other side, where Vichy's police, mostly anti-German, were serving the regime in public and scuttling it in private. The Resistance was getting information about Vichy plans from secret documents taken from government files by its own employees.

Vichy secret police were involved in the sensational escape from Koenigsberg of Gen. Henri Giraud, who for a time shared the presidency of the provisional French government based in Algeria with de Gaulle. Whom they were really working for still is a mys-

ing helped bring de Gaulle to power with a secret pro-de Gaulle group.

Soustelle's General Direction of Special Services was the ancestor of today's Service of External Documentation and Counterespionage, the group most deeply tarred in the Ben Barka Affair. Moved from Algiers to France, it became the General Direction of Investigations and Research. There might have been less need for it if the Indochinese revolution had not occurred. The name of SEDC came in then before the Algerian war broke out and created a need for still other special services. It was the Algerian war that fastened the most disreputable of French police forces on the Fifth Republic.

The first group came from Algeria:



CAPT. ALFRED DREYFUS



ADM. JEAN DARLAN

pire to the Fifth Republic, France has been afflicted by overzealous police and

tery. So is the identity of the group which organized the assassination in Algiers of Adm. Jean Darlan.

Giraud protested to de Gaulle when Jacques Soustelle was named head of the provisional government's secret services because he was a civilian.

"If that bothers you, I'll dress him up in a general's uniform," de Gaulle said.

Soustelle now is in exile for heading a secret anti-de Gaulle group after hav-

Algerian-born Europeans who were imported into France to fight Algerian terrorists. They inflicted upon France the shame of extensive police use of torture. They were brought in because, supposedly, they were experts in dealing with Algerians and insisted on doing things their own way.

Then terrorism shifted sides. The Europeans of the Secret Army Organization began to employ it and the of-

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ficial police, open and secret, turned out to be useless. The sympathies of too many of them were antigovernment. Terrorists were tipped in advance of actions planned against them. The answer was the creation of special police forces, more or less extralegal, which were dubbed "barbouzes" (false whiskers), a nickname given to secret agents in the spy novels of Dominique Ponchardier, a former secret agent and now French Ambassador to Bolivia.

The barbouzes were a tough lot and some were recruited from unsavory backgrounds. There were a few Resistance heroes among them, but there were also toughs who had manhandled their countrymen for the Gestapo during the Occupation, and there were simple criminals.

When the Algerian war was over, the



MEHDI BEN BARKA

secret agents.

problem arose, "How do you get rid of a barbouze?" One answer seemed to be to use him for piecework—for instance, the kidnaping of Col. Antoine Argoud, the Secret Army Organization leader, from Germany. That episode had a certain resemblance to the Ben Barka Affair. The supposition has always been that criminals did the job and obligingly deposited their captive, bound hand and foot, in a delivery truck near police headquarters.

At least three persons connected with the Ben Barka kidnaping are suspected of having had something to do with the Argoud case. One is Georges Figon, a lawyer and possibly the No. 1 man in the Ben Barka Affair. Police found him shot dead and described it as suicide, a theory which is not finding universal acceptance.

Another is a gangster named Julien Le Ny, alias Le Grand Dede, accused of being one of the criminals in Moroccan pay who took delivery of Ben Barka from the two French policemen who kidnaped him. The third is Gaullist Deputy Pierre Lemarchand, commonly supposed to have been the chief of one group of barbouzes during the Algerian war.

But does the group still exist? The French Bar Association seems to think so, for it has just opened a debate on whether or not it is incompatible with a lawyer's functions to direct an extralegal police force. Figon said Lemarchand dined with a group of criminals, some of them implicated in the Ben Barka case, and told them that he expected to be named Secretary of State for Police in the new government, and that he then intended to put them all in jail—perhaps a warning to them to leave the country.

A Well-Hated Man

DO THE anti-Secret Army barbouzes of Jacques Foccart still exist? Foccart, Secretary-General of de Gaulle's Elysee Palace office staff, assigned to handle African and Madagascan affairs, directed this clandestine force during the Algerian war. But now that the war is over, it may very well have been disbanded.

Antoine Lopez, the SEDC agent who is the No. 1 figure in the Ben Barka case if Figon isn't, told a policeman whom he was trying to enroll in the affair that he was "covered" by Foccart—or so the policeman says. Lopez has denied that he involved Foccart. Foccart is one of the most hated men in France in extreme right circles because his barbouzes were so effective in dealing the death blow to secret army terrorism, so no opportunity is missed to smear him.

Whether the barbouzes still exist as an organized force is not necessarily significant in the Ben Barka case. The scandal is that regular French police services were involved. Figon may have started the affair, but if he did he had to call on the services

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of Lopez of the SEDC, who knew that the kidnaping was planned five months in advance and helped to arrange its details when it finally came off.

The SEDC is almost the exact counterpart of the American CIA. Its activities are restricted to the foreign field. It is an immense organization and inhabits imposing headquarters called the Barracks of Tournelle. Its budget is secret, and no one outside of a few persons in the government knows how much it costs. It is split into different, often warring, divisions, separated from one another by hermetic partitions. Its agents have a habit of making policy by undertaking, on their own responsibility, acts that cannot fail to affect national policy.

There can hardly be a better example than the Ben Barka case, which has embroiled an unsuspecting French government with Morocco.

The two French policemen who kidnaped Ben Barka last Oct. 29, according to the accepted version of what happened, drove him to a suburban villa and handed him over to a group of thugs hired by Moroccan Interior Minister Oufkir. Ben Barka supposedly was murdered but there is no proof, and no corpse has been found. The only evidence that Ben Barka was killed is the testimony of Figon, who is dead.

Figon said he saw Oufkir torture Ben Barka at the villa, but Ben Barka was moved to a second villa and Figon assumed he was then killed, but wasn't present.

One theory circulating is that Ben Barka was taken to Brest and then to Morocco by freighter and is now imprisoned.

The rivalries within the SEDC are paralleled by those among the different French police forces, traditionally

hostile to each other except when they have to band together when they get into a bad bind. This may account for several episodes in the present case.

For instance, did Lopez try to freeze Figon out of the reported \$140,000 the Moroccans were offering for Ben Barka by organizing the kidnaping himself, and is that why Figon got back into the act by taking a taxi to the villa where two official police cars had conducted Ben Barka? Was Lopez arrested because the rival General Information Service of the Paris Police Prefecture was happy to pin something on the SEDC?

To date, the following official police services have been more or less tarred in the case:

- The SEDC, not only through Lopez but through his superior, to whom he had reported what was going on. The SEDC was a more or less autonomous organization reporting to Premier Georges Pompidou's office. De Gaulle has now transferred it to the army.

- The Judiciary Police, through its Morals Brigade, which deals with narcotics, prostitution, etc., from which the two police kidnapers were recruited; through its Criminal Brigade, which investigated the case, though it seems not to have been given information which was in the possession of its superiors; through its General Information Bureau, which had Figon's confession two days after the crime and through its two chiefs, to whom the police kidnapers confessed five days later. The Judiciary Police are under the Paris Police Prefecture, and Prefect Maurice Papon also was informed of what had happened within a few days of the kidnaping.

- The Interior Ministry, which controls the police throughout the nation, became involved when Papon, whose prefecture handles only the Paris Police, passed on his information to Interior Minister Roger Frey, while others

involved told Frey's bureau chief about it.

All of these individuals and services, more or less fully informed about the crime within a few days after it happened—and the SEDC months before it happened— withheld what they knew from the judicial authorities investigating the case for ten weeks. They kept much of it from De Gaulle as long as they could—for instance, the circumstance that French police were involved—and even, it appears, from the police commissioner working on the case, who had to get his first precise leads from the Express, whose detective work brought it into the open.

Express is being sued by Papon on a charge of libeling the French police, along with the sensational weekly Minute, a refuge for the defeated die-hard French Algeria faction — which, incidentally, derives some of its information from the connections retained by one of its backers who was removed some years ago from the head of one of France's more occult official police services because he was becoming too powerful.

Police Autonomy

THE INDEPENDENT power of the French police accounts for the considerable degree of autonomy they often exercise, which makes possible an operation such as the Ben Barka one, which plunged the government into difficulties because police served a foreign power without government knowledge.

There were several reasons for this. One which interested the individual actors was the money. Another, which secured the go-ahead from superiors, was the "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" give and take common among secret services the world over. This was intensified by the fact that many operators are double or triple agents.

Rabat is the headquarters for the

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Secret Actions Have Been Way of Life Since Napoleon

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French secret services working everywhere in Africa. They therefore were ready to oblige Oufkir. Moreover, a couple of years ago, the Moroccan secret services returned one of France's barbouzes who was arrested for trying to blow up Ben Barka's predecessor as opposition leader. So it was Morocco's turn to ask a favor.

Finally, Oufkir had worked in intelligence when he was in the French army and had cooperated with French agents in Morocco when he headed the Moroccan secret police before becoming Interior Minister, so though it seems unlikely, as some have speculated, that a Moroccan minister could have been an out-and-out agent of the French secret services, he was no doubt on the best of terms with them.

The autonomy of French police services which permits them to carry on

private deals of the sort apparently made with Oufkir stems partly from the power of the information they have on the most powerful men in the country—including the politicians who are supposed to be their bosses. Few of those are completely secure from blackmail.

"You make a bad mistake in your country," I was told not long ago by a man who knows the power of the French secret police because he headed one branch of it for several years. "You leave your police heads in power too long. We change them every five to seven years. It takes five years for the top policeman to really learn all he needs to know, but by the end of seven, he knows too much. You have to get him away from those secret files."

Thus the police become a law unto themselves. Their primary interest is to preserve their own position, not

that of the government. Many a French ministry has found the police dragging their feet because their zeal for obeying the government was tempered by a desire not to get in wrong with the next government.

At the time of the prewar Cagoulard Affair, when the determination of Interior Minister Marx Dormoy to get at the top men behind extreme right terrorism so alarmed others that the government resigned, a long cabinet crisis seemed to be developing over Dormoy's desire to uncover the higher-ups before a new government could be formed.

Dormoy lost, and he was bound to lose. For the police, knowing that he would not be their boss for long, stopped executing his orders. They knew his successors intended to let a few heads drop, and they did not care to have their own included.

